TRANSCRIPT—TALBERT FLYNN

Interviewee: Talbert Flynn

Interviewer: Ruth Ehrlich

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Ruth Ehrlich: So tell me, Talbert, where were you born? What was your date of birth?

Talbert Flynn: I've got in the habit of saying it this way. 7/18/34.

RE: And where were you born?

TF: I was born in Henderson County.

RE: Were you born in a hospital? Were you born at home?

TF: I really didn't never know. I think I was just born at home.

RE: And what is your wife's name?

TF: You want her maiden name?

RE: Yeah.

TF: Ruby Whitaker.

RE: Ruby Whitaker. She was related to the Whitakers that we talked to, Sandra?

TF: All of them.

Sandra Jackson: Probably all of them are.

RE: When did you and Ruby get married?

TF: I think it was, well, I was seventeen years old.

RE: Were you really?

TF: Yeah, and she was twenty-five.

RE: And you've been married you told me how long?

TF: Sixty-six.

RE: That's wonderful.

TF: I knew why I got you onto a Jackson.

SJ: I married a Jackson, but I was a Noland.

RE: You know this girl.

SJ: I knew he did, it just took him a second. He worked with Mom for years.

RE: OK. Tell me, you and Ruby have children?

TF: Yeah, four.

RE: Four. Tell us about those, who they are and when they were born.

TF: I don't know. Gail was the daughter.

RE: Okay. And then who came next.

TF: Bill. William Talbert, Jr.

Okay. And then who was next.

TF: Gary. Gary Dean. Then Carson.

RE: Do you know about how old they are now?

TF: I forgot myself. You could call the house. My wife or Gail could tell you.

RE: We can do that, if that's all OK, we can do that. We can call Gail later.

TF: I know Gail's sixty-four, March past.

RE: Is she the oldest one?

TF: Yeah.

RE: We'll give Gail a call then. Did you go to school? Where'd you go to school?

TF: Fairview.

RE: Fairview Elementary?

TF: All of it.

RE: Fairview Elementary and High School was one school?

TF: Yeah.

RE: Did you go to college or trade school at all?

TF: I went ten years to school, and quit in fifth grade and left. How's that?

RE: You quit at the fifth grade?

TF: I quit in fifth grade. I went ten years.

RE: Are you being funny?

TF: No.

RE: Tell us how you did that.

TF: Well, I failed every one but the first grade, and I just got tired of doing it, you see. So, I just put my stuff together and carried it up and laid it down. Didn't say a word about it, carried it up there and laid it on the teacher's desk, and said "Bye. I won't be back."

RE: How'd that go over?

TF: It went over just fine.

RE: How old were you when you quit?

TF: I was sixteen. And I went to work at the mill, went to work at the sawmill. The sawmill was there at where the fire department is now. And Fate and Lewis Kirstein run the sawmill and their daddy.

RE: Where the fire department is in Fairview.

TF: Sitting right there.

RE: And what did you do at the sawmill?

TF: The people cut timber and we all then made planks out of it to build houses.

RE: And you ran those machines when you were sixteen?

TF: Yeah. Done whatever he told me. I logged new woods and cut timber with a crosscut saw, hauled it out on a horse and wagon. Some of it we trucked.

RE: How long did you work at the sawmill?

TF: I worked at the sawmill not too long, because I got married, ‘til I got seventeen. We did like the good book said. A man ought to live with his wife one year before going into service. So, when it was time to go, I went.

RE: And you went to service, was that World War II?

TF: No, it was during the Korean War. And that’s when they called it off and quit was, you know, no more war, and got them straightened out, and declared that the war was stopped, ended, period. And then next thing I knew I was at Fort Benning. I went to Fort Jackson for infantry training.

RE: Now that would be, was that for World War?

TF: No.

RE: Still the Korean War.

TF: Yeah. When I went through basic training at Fort Jackson. Then I go to Fort Benning to go through military school again as a paratrooper.

RE: You were a paratrooper?

TF: Yeah. So, I got through that. After they called that off, see we'd have gone to Korea. But they called the war off and everything. So, we just, I had Ruby with me all the time. I drug her through basic training, and the second part.

SJ: So, you didn't have to go to Korea. You just did

TF: No, because it was over with.

RE: Did you ever use those paratrooper skills after that?

TF: Oh, yeah, I remember those until today.

RE: Did you ever jump out of a plane after you came home though?

TF: No, not after I got out of the service. No, but it wouldn't have mattered, I jumped out anywhere. I was at Fort Benning. I stayed at Fort Benning. I was part of working in the country, in the company that trained paratroopers. I spend my time there in that company.

RE: And when you got out of military, what did you do?

TF: Went back to the same old thing.

RE: Went back to the same old thing at the sawmill?

TF: Same old thing at the sawmill, and then I learned to drive the bulldozers and stuff like that, drive trucks, so I done some of that.

RE: All at the sawmill.

TF: Yeah, I done all the sawmill plus the other. I worked for, what was his name. Dick Bishop Construction Company. He had trucks, he had bulldozers, loaders, and all kinds of stuff like that.

RE: So, you were a paratrooper, you did sawmill work, and you did heavy equipment?

TF: Yeah.

RE: Gracious, you run a farm now?

TF: No, I've got a piece of land on Sharon Road, it's about, it's a hundred and forty foot deep from the road, a hundred forty-seven foot and a hundred twenty foot long, wide. So, it would have been right there.

RE: Now tell me, did Ruby work?

TF: Never worked, till, unh-unh. But Carson started going to school, he was the last one. And she had never worked. She took care of the house, and I worked and made the money to live on. And she worked enough she could draw her Social Security. Sixty-five, she retired. Then I went on a few more years, then I retired.

RE: Where did you and Ruby live when you all were first married?

TF: Right there, her mother's place, which was right across from the fire department. That was the Whitakers.

RE: So, you didn't have far to travel to get to that sawmill, did you?

TF: No, I lived on that hill. If you come thisaway to the left where they cut this hill back when they built this bigger fire department, well, I lived up on that hill there. That was Crayton Earley's old place.

RE: Did you and Ruby live independent of the parents, or did you share a house with the parents?

TF: We shared a house with the parents till I went into the military. I rented a place, and when we come back, then we didn't live with them, we lived in our own place.

RE: When you settled, you and Ruby, after the military, when you came back, did you always stay on Sharon Road, or was this before Sharon Road?

TF: No, Sharon Road was the last part. In fact, we were retired from the school, building our house and all that. We lived and rented houses around.

RE: But you were always in Fairview?

TF: Yeah

RE: I bet you've seen some real changes, haven't you?

TF: Oh, yeah. But I didn't keep up with it.

RE: So, when you and Ruby were getting started and you came back, did you farm?

TF: I done farmed enough, I was farming when I was six, eight years old. Down on Cane Creek. My daddy and mama lived at the old Cooper place. If you're going down Cane Creek, the Cooper place is when you go beyond the rest home down Cane Creek. That next opening down there where the bottoms and things are. I plowed all them at eight years old with a horse and plow, not a tractor.

SJ: How old were you when you moved to Fairview?

TF: We moved to Fairview, I lived in Fairview, well, I was eight years old when we lived down there at the Cooper place. Then we went, let's see, went from the Cooper place, and then we went to the Williams place, that's on Joe Jenkins Road. Went to there. That was the Williams place. Then in 1958, or '48, we moved to Fairview and lived there.

RE: Now tell me about that farming. An eight-year-old, you were running the tractor?

TF: No, turning plow with a horse.

RE: You were doing that at eight years old.

TF: Yeah, all them big bottoms.

RE: What kind of gardening were you doing? What kinds of things were you planting in that field?

TF: Everything you wanted.

RE: Did you have to hoe?

TF: Hoe it and everything

RE: Harvest and all that kind of stuff

TF: I was back in the horse and wagon day.

RE: So, what did you do with the produce you raised? You had farm animals, too?

TF: We had people come there and buy. Because we didn't have a car. Daddy didn't have a car.

RE: So, if you had occasion to go into town, did you go into town?

TF: Very seldom. But that was, as I got a little older, ten, twelve, thirteen years old

RE: How did you get into town?

TF: I didn't drive no car, because I didn't have one.

RE: How'd your family get into town?

TF: Daddy could borrow anybody's car or truck, if Mother and Daddy had to go. Finally, I went with the older buddies. Daddy never owned a car until after I went, I was going, right before I went in the service. And a man give it to him. It was '35 Ford pickup and it was a small truck. It wasn't a big truck, a small truck.

RE: Now did you have brother and sisters?

TF: Yeah, it's ten of us and I was the oldest.

RE: You were eight years old, plowing that field with a horse, and you had nine more siblings down the road.

TF: Yeah.

RE: Did they give you any relief with the gardening and the plowing, and the farm work?

TF: No.

RE: They didn't?

TF: The girls helped Mama in the house, the boys done what they wanted to. None of them wanted to get to the plow or to the sawmill.

RE: Did you like plowing, did you want to get out there?

TF: Oh, yeah. See, I'd go down there, in the bottoms with Daddy. We never had a horse till my uncle found a horse in Edneyville. Daddy's brother. So, he bought a forty dollar horse, fully harnessed, and rode him bareback to down there at the Coopers' place, and that was the deal. And then the people, the Coopers had the plows around, so we just used what was there.

RE: But your brothers never helped you out in the fields?

TF: No, well, sometimes, sister would, most times my mother would. She died young. She was only forty years old.

RE: What were your mom and dad's names?

TF: Mama's name, she was a Freeman. But her name was Ethyl Agnes Freeman Flynn.

RE: And what was your dad's name?

TF: William Eugene Flynn.

RE: And your mom died young.

TF: Yeah, at forty. She died right after I come back out of the service.

RE: And how old was the youngest one when she died?

TF: I don't know, but me and Ruby had to finish raising them and sending them to school and take care of them.

RE: How many of them were left for you to take care of?

TF: There was May and Margaret and Tommy and Smoky and Mary, all of them.

RE: You had your hands full, then, didn't you?

TF: Wasn't no handful. Everybody done what they supposed to

RE: Listen to that. Now that is remarkable, Talbert, that you and Ruby are newly married and you're taking care of

TF: No, this was years afterwards, after I came back out of the service.

RE: But you're still fairly newly married.

TF: Yeah.

RE: It had been a couple of years, you were taking care of that whole clan?

TR: Yeah. It wasn't no big job. Everybody, when you growed up in the family, there were certain things you just automatically picked up yourself and you just went on and done them. And you had to go to the spring from here, down the hill yonder around the bank or wherever the spring was, and carry the water and all that stuff. And the barns and the hog pens and that kind of stuff had to be way back of the house, so you had to feed and take care of them. Chickens and billy goats and all that kind of stuff.

RE: Did you all slaughter your animals so you'd have meat?

TF: We raised the beef, we raised a hog or two. That was all we slaughtered. Of course, we'd cut a chicken's head off every once in a while.

RE: My mammaw used to wring the chicken's neck.

TF: My mother leant me that, she didn't weigh nothing. She wasn't but about five foot tall.

RE: She taught you to wring a chicken's neck.

TF: Yeah, and she said, "This is the way you do it, you catch it right by the head, you sling him around and around and then you stop, and it'll come right off."

RE: And did that work pretty effectively?

TF: Why, sure. ( )

RE: Did you teach anybody else how to do that?

TF: Oh, yeah.

RE: And did they do it well?

TF: Oh, yeah. They could do it.

RE: Did your mama can, too?

TF: Oh, Lord, yeah. We canned so much, we canned probably, some of it's in gallon jars, and some of it in quart, but everything that we put up, we probably put up a hundred quarts of each.

RE: I'm sure it got you through the fall

TF: Through the next year.

RE: To the next garden harvest

TF: Yeah.

RE: And you just think you just took all that in stride.

TF: Sure.

RE: That's just the way it was.

TF: That's just the way I hooked up to getting married, because I wasn't supposed to get married, I wasn't thinking about marrying.

RE: How'd you get married then?

TF: We growed up our families close together, we knowed each other's family, of course, we knowed everybody's family, so this is a short story. Ruby and her sister-in-law come from over in front of the fire department up to see my mother up at the Earley place on the hill. So, they went up there, so we went. I was going to Hendersonville in the old truck, and I went down to Meddards' (?), this old store, you don't know where it is?

RE: No

TF: Where the red light is now going down Cane Creek, that big rock store. I went down to there, I said, I ain't going to Hendersonville, mess around over there, because they'd lock you up in a minute in Hendersonville, that was a no-man's town. If you got stopped or talked to, you more than likely was going to jail. So, anyway, I turned around down there and come back. I was going over to meet some older boys, no girls. I turned around and come back. Ruby and her sister-in-law would come up to the house. My daddy and Ruby's oldest brother Joe Whitaker had gone to the city auditorium for all night gospel singing. Mother, she's about like a young'un to me, she'd just go along, she said "Talbert," because everything closed up out here at six o'clock. There wasn't that many stores. We had to go to Biltmore. She said, "why don't you run out there and get us some hot dogs and some marshmallows, (and it was in kind of cool time,) we'll cook them over the fire." And the heater just opened the door and toast them a little and eat them. Well, I went out there and got them. And never did see the things after that. My mother laughed and sat with the rest of the young'uns and eat that stuff, and talked about it. I was buddies were Ruby's brothers. And my daddy was buddies to the older brothers that was in World War II. So, I said, of course to satisfy Mother, "OK, I'll run out there and get you the marshmallows and the hot dogs so you can have a wienie roast and stuff." And Ruby is sitting there and I said "Hello, or Hey Ruby," or something like that, you know, and that's all. But I said, "you want to ride out there with me?" She said, "Yeah, I'll go with you." Well, I wasn't thinking about a thing. She was just a friend and I knowed her, she was all them boys' sister. So we's going through the stretch out yonder before you get to the dollar store, that stretch. I said, I got up enough nerve and I said, "How full's your date book?" She smart mouthed me, said, "I don't have one of them things, I want you to know." Well, that was the end of that. We didn't say no more to each other.

I kept waiting what she's going to say next. Anyway, went out there and got 'em, coming back, I said, well, I better ask her, I said, "Well, you want to go out next Saturday night?" She said, "Whatever." That was it. We went out that weekend. And I didn't even walk down there to see her through the week. Just pick her up there on Saturday, get her and go. Don't be monkeying around. So, we done that, and so I said, "You want to go out next Saturday?" then when I brought her home. She said, "Whatever." This girl don't know nothing but 'Whatever.' So, we went out the next Saturday, it was alright, we always come home by eight or nine o'clock, civilized people. So, I just up and said, "Well, you want to get married next Saturday?" "Whatever."

[laughter]

RE: Three dates?

TF: No, two dates.

RE: Two dates and the next was to get married?

TF: Yeah. So, a buddy of mine took us to Greenville, South Carolina, old Guy Gullick was the judge, and he married us, on a Saturday morning. So that's the way it got together and been happy ever since.

SJ: Does she still say Whatever?

TF: Yeah. And everybody picked it up. You know our young'uns, and our nephews and nieces, she still, 'Whatever.'

RE: So, what did you all do when you went out? What did you all do for fun?

TF: Nothing. We just might ride down Biltmore and get a hamburger and a drink, sit around, talk to some of the older boys like Ruby's age, and go back home, about eight o'clock or nine, so when we went and got married, I said, well, we went out to Biltmore, got us a

hamburger and stuff. We got that old big enough that I could get a beer. We went out there, got that, come back, said, “I guess, I better take you home.” She said, “Hold it.” I said, “What do you mean, hold it?” She said, “Where you sleep, I sleep. You’re my husband now.” And then I found out later years, her mama told on her. The second night, the second Saturday we went out. She come home and told her mama and her older sisters, said “I’m going to marry that boy.” They said, “You can’t marry a boy. No sir, you ain’t going to marry Talbert Flynn.” She said, “That’s a good boy.” She said, “I know it. That’s why I’m going to marry him.”

RE: So, she was just pleased as punch when you asked her that.

TF: Never fussed, never nothing like that. That didn’t come out. Her family, nor my family either, we wasn’t raised like that. What the heck’s any use of fussing, you’re going to make up anyway.

RE: Now what did Ruby do? You said she went to work after Carson went to school.

TF: She went to work with me at Reynolds Middle. The year that it opened, 1975 wasn’t it? Yeah, I think it.

RE: Now somebody told us that you’ve got a story for us about the racetrack. We don’t want to skip out on that one.

TF: Oh, Lord. The racetrack was up there, you know where Hollywood Road is? When you turn in Hollywood Road and you go out there and you turn up the hill, all that bottom back through there used to be the Fairview racetrack. We thought them’s just good old boys having a racetrack, they’d hum that racetrack down. A couple of them had wrecks, too, turned over down on this end of it. Got too close to the edge to make a pass, and out over the bank. And that thing done good. But I didn’t know what it was all about, you know. I didn’t pay no attention to stuff like that. Really didn’t care about that, I just went because my brothers went, and Daddy went,

and I said I'll go with them. So, I went up there. I saw, I got it, with the place up there where they get your hot dogs and drinks and all that stuff. And I had a little washtub, you remember that, with a bale on it, so I got the job of selling the drinks in the audience, you know, and I done that, made pretty good money.

RE: I don't think anybody's mentioned the Hollywood racetrack, the Fairview racetrack at Hollywood Road, I don't think anybody's mentioned that.

TF: I come to find out, I said, "Why's them people doing that," because Ruby's brother-in-law was one of the drivers. His name was James Newman, married Alene, Ruby's sister. They told me after, I found out, I said why's that makes you driving like that, acting like that. And what they were, fix that racetrack, running them racetracks making a lot of money and old Charlie McBrayer was making the money for leasing them racetrack grounds. Come to find out, they weren't good old racecar drivers, that wasn't their interest at all. They were learning them in '40 model cars, and less. '36, '37, '38, '40 models. Didn't go much over a '40 model. But they was driving them and what they was doing was actually practicing, training to be whiskey runners.

RE: Talbert

TF: And that's where they come, and Robert Mitchum made the movie you know, Thunder Road.

RE: So, you never ran any whiskey, for them?

TF: No, I used to make, my daddy made some whiskey for self, but he made a lot of whiskey. His deal was, Daddy and Guy Merrell was big buddies, and the big sheriff that spent 33 or 34 years as Buncombe County Sheriff, Lawrence Brown. They was making it, and Lawrence

Brown was coming, sending sheriff's cars out and getting it from Daddy. And they was hauling it in town, selling it and making all the money from it.

RE: Did you help Daddy make the whiskey?

TF: No. But I made some. I didn't sell it. I give it away. I like to make it. Everybody wanted to come to the house and say they want some rum or they want some red or white whiskey, I had corncob wine and all that kind of stuff. I knowed how to make it because my old buddy down in Georgia that was older than I was, me and Ruby rented from when we was in Fort Benning. He learnt me how.

RE: Did you drink it?

TF: Yeah, I drunk a little bit, we didn't drink that much. We knew what it'd do.

RE: Did you make some money selling it?

TF: No.

RE: But you gave it away. Did you and Ruby build your house on Sharon Road?

TF: Yeah.

RE: When did you do that?

TF: It's been 34 years now. It's partially underground, around both ends and around the back it goes up. The house is one floor down here.

RE: Did you design that house?

TF: Yeah, on a piece of ... on a piece of board out at the school, big sheet about that big. I drawed it and said, "There's your house." Ruby said, "My Lord," she said, "You can't build a house like that." I said, "Why can't I?" I built houses all over the country here with Charlie Marlowe, all those Marlowes, all the people worked building houses, I was in business myself twelve years, before I went to work at the school. I knowed how to build a house.

RE: So, the house you said was partially underground. Why did you do it that way?

TF: Well, I done it that way because the bank went up like that. I just brought it down, made me a big back yard, behind the trailer, behind the bank. So, it goes up to where the brick, the block goes and fix that way. Underground, it's easy to heat and easy to cool.

RE: That was pretty forward thinking, wasn't it?

TF: Yeah. I caught that from the Army Corps of Engineers, and we knowed how to bury something in the ground. Used to take a tank and bulldoze out a road, a place big as this place here, this building, and bury tanks and things under it, when we had to roll with them in combat, you'd think you were looking at a brush pile and a bunch of trees on top of it, up they'd come out of the ground. And that's when all hell broke loose. Them tanks come up out of the ground, everybody coming down to meet them, "My God." And they just kept them coming. One tank after another. Yeah, we pushed trees down. Pushed whole trees down this big. We built that thing waterproofed it overhead, logs went across, you know them trees, as beams to carry stuff under there. We was underground like the moles.

RE: You've been in Fairview all your life, pretty much, right?

TF: Yeah.

RE: Except when you were in the army, in the military?

TF: All but when I was in Possum Holler.

RE: When you were in Possum Holler. Where's Possum Holler?

TRF: Over in Bat Cave.

RE: And what took you to Possum Holler?

TF: That's where my mama and people lived. Where my daddy was born on Middle Fork. That's over that way.

RE: So, were you born over in Possum Holler?

TF: Yeah.

RE: Then you came to Fairview. What kept you in Fairview? Why did you never leave?

TF: Couldn't. Didn't have enough money to go no further.

RE: Would you leave today?

TF: No.

RE: No, its's a good place to be.

TF: Oh, it's all right. It's all right. It's bad the way it is.

RE: What's bad?

TF: It's getting bad now because, you know it was so open and everybody was kind of by their self, and now they're coming into places, building those little box houses and pushing them back the mountain and charging people $300,000 for something like that. And they'll die paying it off. And all this stuff, just didn't need it. God moves people, you know. So they're coming, they're coming to stay somewhere, so they're going to keep right on building. That why this country and why Asheville, Asheville is too big. T-totallly too big. I remember when Asheville didn't have much in it but a bus station, Harry's Cadillac, Ford company, Chevrolet company. Them and that, you know. And now. You been into Asheville?

RE: Umhm.

TF: Do you drive up, go down to Biltmore and then go up into Asheville?

RE: We go different ways. But I moved from Atlanta, so Asheville's not too big.

TF: Well, it's way too big.

RE: I guess it's all relative.

TF: But the peoples that's coming, it's like up here on the mountain, Ruby's people owned all that mountain up here at Mine Hole Gap, all that land back there, that was Ruby's kinfolks owned all that. And now they is to wasting it and building up. They're building there and building nice houses back there, it costs you a million dollars, some of them. All right, but then, after they got all them filled up, got what they's going to do with it, then they move out here in the front and start building these little old dinky houses. They start, that sign on the road, it starts at $300,000. See, I built my whole house, and buying the piece of land, and building a house and everything, we got 18,000 dollars in it. And I've been offered $200,000 for it. It ain't even, no use in even talking, it ain't for sale period, because I got young'uns and I got grand young'uns and done got the papers made out who takes charge next. As they die off.

RE: What kinds of games did you all play when you were little?

TF: We played ball of course. But it was nigger baseball or whatever. Do you know what they do?

RE: No, what's that?

TF: When they hit the ball, and if you picked it up on the ground, long as you hit the runner with the ball ( ). Called it nigger baseball.

And you were hitting the person?

TF: Yeah, they'd hit him. If you picked it up and you could hit him with it between the bases, he was out.

Now, what kind of ball were you using?

TF: Baseball. Regular baseball. And we had bats we made out of hickorys and stuff like that, and ash, and made them ourselves. Some of them hollered. You might cut out on him and miss him. But you did he had a chance, the other feller'd catch it , and then he'd hit him with it.

Y'all were mean

TF: No, that's what it was called, that's the way they done it.

Did you play other games?

TF: Oh, yeah.

What other games?

TF: Horseshoe mostly. Yeah. Horseshoe. And we got some old boxing gloves, and then we'd go around and have boxing matches. And the girls was in on that, too. I trained my sisters pretty good. They could flat out bust you in the mouth.

What about that tying a knot on a wallet and slinging it on the road and having a string to it. Did you all do that?

TF: No, no, no, we didn't do none of that stuff. Back in the old days they wouldn't do things like that. No sir, we didn't do none of that stuff.

Kids were pretty good back in the old days, weren't they?

TF: Yeah, they was a lot better than they are now, because they never did get beat with a stick.

Did you ever get beat by a stick? Did you ever do anything to get beat?

TF: My daddy didn't whup me. He'd beat me. He'd actually cut the blood out of you. But my mama, she's about five foot, you know, all she had to do is just say "Gene." That stopped the whole thing, just that quick.

Did you all go to church when you were a kid, growing up?

TF: Yeah. Me and my daddy. Daddy got killed two or three times, come back alive. So, we went. Mother went before I was born and when the young'uns started coming along, Mother

couldn't go, she'd stay at the house. Then me and Daddy'd go, but we used to have to walk. See, we didn't have no car or nothing.

Where'd you go to church?

TF: We went to Pleasant Grove and then we went to Fairview Baptist, and then I went to, what is it, this one right here on top of Harper Hill

Cane Creek?

TF: That's Cane Creek, ain't it? That one right there, because I live right over yonder, at Wards then, down Jenkin's Road, so that's where I went. We used to walk from John Concord's up Garren Creek. Do you know where the Morrows and the Gregorys and them live? Well, it's on up the road yonder to where you see, you know where Pleasant Grove is. But you go through all the stretches up that road there, going by ahead up there yonder. You know where that old barn is?

SJ: I don't go down that way enough to really know.

TF: It's been there for a hundred years. It used to be a little dairy there. And the people lived there. We used to walk from there all the way to Pleasant Grove. And then if we had to get groceries we had to walk all the way from there to Guy Merrell's store and carry it all back. So, we didn't go often. And then we moved to, you know where Hollywood Road is. All right. You turn off up yonder to the bottom, go around and keep going straight up. We lived up there in the hollers where the Earleys was all raised. That was the year I started to school up there. Walked from there to Pleasant Grove and walked back. Yeah, we'd go to church, and then I went to Cane Creek here. Then when I moved to Fairview, some of my buddies was going to Fairview Baptist, so I went to Fairview Baptist, Mother and Daddy and us.

Who were your buddies you went with?

TF: Henry Sales and his brothers.

Clark?

TF: Clark, and Henry Sales, Clark Sales. They was going, see, so I went there with them. Their people. And they had cars to go. I lived there on Earley Hill. All I had to do was walk up to church road there a piece. And that was back when the old inn was there, you know.

No, I don't know that.

TF: The old Fairview Inn. Right when you turn up Garren Creek Road behind the fire department there? Turn up Garren Creek Road.

There was an inn?

TF: Yeah, there was the Fairview Inn, and it, part of it back then belonged to the Ashworths, and do you know about, you go up Garren Creek Road, you know where it ends.

Yeah.

TF: Me and Ruby lived, right up there, you go up Garren Creek Road, we went right through the middle of the old Fairview Inn. And then, you know where Mr Herring lived? There in the first brick house. And there used to be right there where you turned up Garren Creek Road, there used to be a big store set back there. And then over here there was a big three-story mansion. The Ashworths was the ones that owned that, some of the Ashworths was schoolteachers. Some of them come, the Alexanders, over across from where I live, Frank and Ben. First they owned Biltmore Forest, the Biltmore estates, the Alexanders did. This is back, you have to go way back. The Alexanders owned that what the Vanderbilts got now? Where the big house is built. The Vanderbilts had bought this piece of land here from the Alexanders. Then they figured out, We're going to have trains coming in, and we got to lay track and we got to lay it out to get stuff to where we're going. So, the Vanderbilts swapped the place there in Fairview

right across from where I used to live, the Alexanders house, Frank and Ben. The Vanderbilts wanted that because they would not, period, there was no way there was going to be a side track laid, a side track laid from Biltmore to Fairview. So, the Vanderbilts with a big bunch of money and stuff swapped places with the Alexanders, Frank and Ben was their name. Martha Alexander and them old schoolteachers back yonder, they were their daughters, and all the boys, Frank, Gene Alexander, Don Fox. So, they couldn't get no train tracks laid out to Fairview, a side track. So that's where they made up their mind where they were going to build a big mansion, Biltmore, the Biltmore house, the big one. So, they had to lay track back there to bring the stones and stuff from foreign countries and things that they wanted to put in that mansion.

So, you're saying that had planned to put it out here but they couldn't get a railroad track

TF: They couldn't get A side track. So no way, it's never, never going to happen.

Not at Mine Hole Gap, it would've been hard.

TF: So they swapped that land, and Frank and Ben and what was his name, I can't think, anyway Ben and Frank Alexander, they were the two old men, and they built the houses over there where you turn off to go across the Brush Creek from Cane Creek? Those two big houses.

I know where Miss Ashworth lived.

TF: In time, over there, the Alexanders put in a sawmill, blacksmith, shops, all kinds of things, I mean where they made everything, done everything, made their living there. Right there.

Morgan Ashworth, that's the one I was thinking of.

TRF: Morgan Ashworth. I was going to tell you. The big house that set there in Fairview, what did I call that a while ago?

Garren Creek?

TF: No, it was a village, like, this big house set there in it, Fairview. Well, I can't even think of the name of it. And it burned down, back when, back in the '50s I guess.

The Fairview Inn you were talking about?

TF: The old Fairview Inn. The Ashworths lived there and then they lived on up the road there. That next big white house on the right side was the Ashworth place. That's going up Garren Creek. And up Church Road, Ashworths owned all kinds of land. And the people that married into the Ashworths and what was the other name. You know the post office used to be right there where you turn up Noble Road?

Blankenships.

TF: Well them people there was Blankenships, and you went on up Noble Road and now it's built up on both sides. And we lived over in that apple orchard. It was Nesbitt's apple orchard, where we lived, back, let's see, is this me and Harley and Jim.

When you look back on your time in Fairview, are there some people that stand out? Are there any stories about Fairview that you can tell us about?

TF: Well, quite a few if I could remember them. People in Fairview I that growed up with, a lot of them dead and gone. But if you think back over it, most of them was good people. Guy Merrell used to be the only store in Fairview. He built it, you can still see the old brick of the store, and it was built during 1932. It had an upstairs in it. Guy wasn't married till he was a pretty elderly man. Him or Hap Miller, neither one. They're brothers, lived upstairs and worked the store. They owned a big piece of property in there.

Could you pretty much get what you needed in terms of when you had to go to the store? Could you get it at Merrell's or did you have to go into Asheville?

TF: No, sometimes if you had certain things, but Guy was a good operator. He could tell you. “I can order it for you,” and it would be here within five to seven days. He had catalogs and stuff, so pick out the battery plate radio that you wanted and pay him for it and he’d order it and you’d come back. And then once a year you’d have to reorder a battery for it, because there weren’t no way to charge it up. The battery would play out and it’d start going, “Turn it up, man the battery’s going dead.”

You remember when you got TV?

TF: We never did get TV. When we was growing up there never was TV. No, people didn’t have TVs. They come along later, later, later, later in the ‘50s. And in the ‘60s, and the ‘70s.

When did you get one?

TF: Me and Ruby didn’t have one for years, because we just didn’t have one. But I knowed this man that worked on TVs, and he had one. His name was... I know it, he lived down here on Webb Creek. We called him Rabbit Williams. He had got ahold of one and he come put it in at the house, had to put up a clothes line like, and got pretty good connection. We wouldn’t never have much time for television.

You’ve lived in Fairview for a long time. Do you remember if there were any natural disasters, floods, fires, that type of thing went on in your years in Fairview?

TF: No

You never were impacted by any of those things?

TF: Yeah, we fought them, but not in Fairview. It was back on Butler Mountain and stuff like that.

You fought what?

TF: Fires, forest fires.

It's kind of scary, isn't it?

TF: Yeah, Lodge Bagley was one of the, he had people with the Forest Service and stuff, and they had certain deputies, you know. They'd come around, pick up, because most of us didn't have cars, pick up a bunch of us boys to go fight fires. They had rakes and everything to fight it with. We'd get 25 cents an hour. We fought all over Flattop Mountain and everywhere else with them.

Where did you all get your medical care when you were growing up?

TF: Well, there really wasn't that much to it. The first hospitals that Daddy went to was when a mishap happened and almost killed him. We was living in Lancaster, South Carolina. It was just me and Harley. We lived in Bat Cave, in Possum Hollow, places like that, with Grandma Freeman, my mama's mama's people.

Were there home remedies that were used?

TF: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

What was a good home remedy?

TF: I reall don't remember all of it. But I know a remedy for colds. What was that, can't even remember it. Can't remember what it was, because I didn't pay that much attention to it, really. But you know, about everybody had whiskey. They had that.

Your grandma never put snuff on bee stings, dipped that tobacco out

TF: No. My mama didn't. My mama dipped snuff, about every one of her sisters, and her brothers but one brother, dipped snuff. And, of course, I dipped some of it too when I was growing up.

Snuff?

TF: Yeah. Me and all my little sisters and little brothers, and all of them. Dipped that snuff.

There's a lot of stone work in Fairview up and down the road. You see a lot of stones. Have you had any experience with the quarries?

TF: Oh, yeah. Back in the old days. I worked for one of the oldest, the oldest bunch of rock masons, really back in the old days, was the Huntleys. They come out of Middle Fork, and Bat Cave, and Possum Holler. And I learned the trade by working for, working with Uncle Dewey, that was Bud Huntley's daddy. And Bud Huntley was a rock mason, too. We learned from them, and I helped lay houses as I was growing up. Back on Brush Creek, there's one man had a house built, mongovous house. His name was Mack Etheridge. In there where the loop is, when you go up at the top,you come across the top and come down the other side. Right up that mountain we built a mongovous house up there, and it was rocked, all of it on the outside.

SJ: Did you always put the arrow in it like Bud did?

TF: No, no, I didn't. That was a signal somebody would do, and nobody wouldn't copy it, see. No.

RE: When you think, Talbert, about Fairview and as long as you've lived here, then and now, what's the biggest differences you see in terms of then and now?

TF: It's been just not like it used to be at all. Back in the '40s it was more fanned out. My uncle Dewey Huntley he laid Paul Nesbitt's store, that rock store right out there next to the school.

You've seen a lot of change in Fairview, haven't you?

TF: Oh, yeah.

What's the thing you miss the most about the old days?

TF: I don't really miss them.

You don't?

TF: No, I think I got my quarter's worth in life. It was all right. I liked it better than anywhere else, because, well, when I come out of the service, I had a buddy or two. They lived up in Atlanta. I was going to come up to Atlanta with them. We lived out of Atlanta about fifteen miles. We lived down there a couple years, after coming out of the service. I learned some more about heavy equipment, because we built, added on to, a big job was Atlanta Airport. Stuff got bigger, it had to be bigger and the runways longer and everything else. So, me and Ruby lived down there and Oop come down there, her baby brother, him and his wife lived with me and Ruby down there for quite a few years. and learned how to run all that other heavy equipment we hadn't been in on.

RE: You seem real content.

TF: Yeah, I can say "well, I'll make the best of it." I'll tell you some people I found out. You might know some of them. Do you know Doc Dill's wife? She's got some history.

I've thought of her and I haven't gotten her called. Dot Dills.

TF: Carson was telling me about it. And then, Barbara White, she was a schoolteacher. She lives, you know when you go up here to the top of the hill, turn left down Sharon Road, turn right back to the right, go down and come out down on Emmas Grove Road. All right. As you start down that steep hill straight down, in that log house right up there. Now she's got boohooves of history. And Barbara White's husband was crazy about all this stuff, and they really got a lot of stuff.

SJ: OK, we can look her up.

RE: Do you remember his name?

TF: Who?

Barbara White's husband.

TF: No, because I think that they divorced. Doc Dill's died, his wife Dot, I don't know how the phone might be hooked up. They got boohooves of stuff. They got old books of the old school.

SJ: I need to call Dot. I keep thinking of calling Dot and I never get it done.

RE: Well, we're going to help you remember.

TF: And the old school was just back that way from the way you go in. Back that way. That's the end of the old school there, the brick part. All right. Then, you had the old school. And then on back yonder where the old gym, where the old gym is now, that is where the lunch room and the two first grades was there, in a log building. When I started school, that's where the first grades was. And the lunch room was in the middle. And Dot has got these books, because I had some of the same books, but mine got gone. I don't know who got them. But it was put together, see, the brick school come out. And then they had the first grade, and then they come across the big spot here was the lunchroom, you went in from the front, from the roadside. And the other first grade was on the other end. The lunchroom was in the middle. And she's got the book that shows that.

RE: Now when you were going to school, was it each grade, was it first grade, second grade, was it all the grades at one time?

TF: No, it went all the way through plumb to the twelfth grade.

But there were individual class groups. So, you were in the first grade, you were in the second grade, you weren't in the classroom with all the classes being in one room at the same time.

TF: No, because you had two grades of each. And after you got up to the what, seventh, no I'd say the eighth, maybe. But anyway, the high school was up in the old gym, it was behind the school. You remember when it set up there on the hill?

RE: No, I'm new here. Sandra might remember.

SJ: No.

TF: You don't remember.

SJ: Eddie probably does, but I don't.

TF: Who?

SJ: My husband.

TF: Yeah.

RE: You think of anything else you want to tell us about Fairview?

TF: No.

RE: Talbert, you have just been delightful. I bet there's stuff that you don't even know you know, you might think about when you get away?

TF: Oh, yeah, I know, when we first come here, we come from over in Possum Holler. Right below where the old Valley Clinic used to be? To show you how country it was, the Valley Clinic was the old school, to start with. And Doctor Bond come in and made a hospital out of it. Then he went back in the Navy for the government. Right on down below that is Possum Holler, turns up in there. And how come us to wind up in South Carolina is all my daddy's people went south to the cotton mills, where they was making money. We moved down there, and Daddy was trying to break up a fight between two of his brothers-in-law, and one of them got a brick and hit him on the top of his head, like to kill him. He had a hole about that big on the top of his head. They wouldn't mess with it because they said it would kill him. We'll just fix it, so they fixed it.

So, every time, it was just dropped in so you could lay an egg in it, and every time his heart beat, it beat on the top of his head. Lifting that up. So, then we come back to Possum Holler. Bat Cave.

SJ: Did they ever fix your daddy's head?

TF: No, no, no, they said it couldn't be fixed. They said he's not going to live if he has any operation. So, what they done, they just cleaned it up and closed it up.

RE: How old was your daddy when he died?

TF: I think Daddy was sixty or so. But I found out there wasn't nothing said about me and Ruby no way. Because we just wouldn't have put up with none of that no way. I didn't say nothing to Mother and Daddy, I didn't say nothing to nobody. All she had told them was, I'm going to marry that boy. And the post office being there on Noble Road. So, I lived right there on Earley Hill, and she come up I'd say, hey Ruby, something like that. She might even come up to the house, talk to Mother for a little.

RE: Now go back to this and tell me just what was it that made you think you were going to marry Ruby when you went out on that third date, was your marriage date. You said you hadn't even been thinking about it. You just said, hey Ruby, come ride with me, and all of a sudden three weeks later you're getting married.

TF: Yeah. We only went out two weekends. The third weekend we went down and got married. Been married ever since.

RE: How long were you married before you had kids?

TF: I wouldn't go in the service, because the good book said a man shouldn't go into combat or be in the military for at least one year after he's married. I'd heard all that stuff in the

church. So, I said I ain't going, this didn't even concern me. So, I just wasn't even bothered with it.

RE: So, did you have children before you went into the military, or after you came back from the military that you had children?

TF: No, we had more, but Gail, the oldest one, the girl, is 64 years old. She was the first, and she was born at Fort Benning, Georgia. She was a military brat. She wasn't no military brat, if you ever seen Gail, or knowed her. We had her and then we come back. She was there. We come up to Atlanta and work some, and one morning I got up and we ate breakfast, and I said, "Well ,you know what I'm going to do today?" She said "What?" Hadn't said nothing about it. I said "I'll be gone about forty-five minute or an hour. You going to guess where I'm going?" "No, I ain't guessing, where you going?" I said, "I'm going down the road here and in about an hour I'll be back with a trailer ready to get back to Fairview."

RE: And Ruby said

TF: She didn't say nothing, I think she didn't even believe it. But then I have to think she did believe it, too, because when I got back, her and Gail had everything carried out in the yard. When I got back with the heavy stuff, I know we just loaded it up and come on up to Atlanta.

RE: So, you just got up one morning and decided you were coming back to Fairview.

TF: No boss man, nothing. My check went in the bank. I went and got a trailer, we ate breakfast, I'm going to go get a trailer, I'm heading home.

RE: What made you decide you had to come back to Fairview?

TF: It just dawned on me.

RE: You just felt like you had that calling, huh? Had to come home. That is too funny.

TF: I said, “You didn’t believe I was going to get that trailer, did you?” She said, “No.” “Well, how come you carried all the stuff out of the house? If we weren’t going, I had have had to carry it all back in.”

What did she say then?

TF: She didn’t say nothing. She said, “I’m glad to be going.”

That’s great.

TF: And then the boys was all born here.

Did they like growing up here? Your boys?

TF: I guess so. They all grown up pretty good.

Are they all still around here now?

TF: Oh, yeah. Two of them in pretty bad shape. Carson and Bill’s got cancer. And I don’t know where it come from. My mama had a certain type of little old cancer back in the old days, but the doctor said he didn’t think that was what killed her.

RE: She did die young, didn’t she.

TF: Yeah.

RE: At forty.

TF: Yeah. But I was telling you about not telling, bragging about going to get married, wasn’t nothing said about nothing, you know. Just got up and went down there and got married and come on back. Ain’t never said a word about it, you know, nothing, nothing, nothing. I only asked my mama. I said “Mama, you think Ruby’d make me a good wife?” She said, “Yeah.” She said, “Ruby’ll make you as good a wife as I’ve made your daddy.” So, I said, “Well, that’s good enough.” That’s all that was ever said. So, I think, they might have I thought I’d ride down there and I’d back out or something. I thought, after I got older and got smarter where I could figure

out, I said, it dawned on me, I said "You know why Mama and Daddy didn't never say nothing my and Ruby getting married. It was vice versa with Mother and Daddy. Daddy was twenty-five and Mamma was seventeen.

Did they get married after two dates?

TF: No, they went together a year or so.

Did you ever date anybody else besides Ruby?

TF: No, not really. We might go to a picture show with somebody. I just never was latched onto them. And then you had stop to think, which I did, why I didn't ask her nothing about that, I didn't even know how she felt about getting married or nothing else. I just up and said, "Well, you want to get married next Saturday?" "Whatever."

SJ: I hope your great-grandkids listen to this tape someday. [Laughter]

RE: Is there anything else you want to tell us or anything else you want us to ask?

TF: I told Ruby, I said "Hey, I figured this thing out. You know why Mother and Daddy never said nothing to me?" They didn't even talk to me about it. Nothing. It's what I asked Mother. They just turned it around. Daddy was twenty-five and Mother was seventeen.

RE: Talbert, we'll wrap up. But we have so appreciated talking to you.

TF: You're welcome

RE: Just delightful.

END OF INTERVIEW